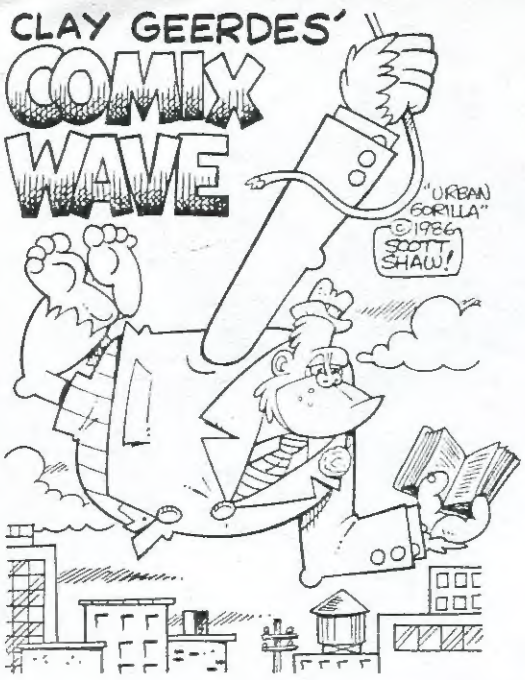

Clay Geerdes **COMIX WAVE 161**
©1995. POB 7094, Berkeley, CA 94707. All Rights Reserved. Artwork and material herein © the artists concerned and used here for promotional purposes only. $12 for the next 12 issues. Checks to Clay Geerdes. Cash or MOs fine.

LYNN HANSEN [1959-1995]

Collector-critic **Lynn Hansen** died circa April 10, 1995, in Roswell, New Mexico. Those interested in Hansen and his work may send an SASE to Steve Willis, POB 390, McCleary, WA 98557-0390. Steve wrote an article about his long relationship with Hansen. It will appear in a future issue of the **WHITE BUFFALO GAZETTE.**

ELLISON'S DREAM CORRIDOR

Davis Wallach

Harlan Ellison's **DREAM CORRIDOR**, a quarterly comic book from Dark Horse, made its first run in January of this year.

This book is for Ellison fans primarily. There is nothing new, original or very creative in the entrees exhibited. As Ellison's output has not progressed or shown any depth in the past four decades, I doubt if he has impressed anyone outside his *cult* of fans. He remains the self-hyped hack and tiresome monologist he has been since I first met him in 1969.

The comic sells for $4.95. It contains four illustrated stories preceded by a drawing of a white-haired unwrinkled Ellison lauding the artists of the stories and himself to the nth degree. The plots are not only recycled Ellison, but reminiscent of Twilight Zone episodes and standard movie plots. To demonstrate that he is not a "sci-fi writer," Ellison submits a western story concerning a gunfighting marshall who won't quit and a gangster revenge plot over the murder of a gang boss's sister. How original!

Harlan has done some good work in the 60s and 70s. A couple of **STAR TREK** scripts as well as two years of tv criticism for the **LA FREE PRESS** and **LA WEEKLY NEWS.** He also had one of his few stories since 1980 selected as one of the best short stories of the year 1993 in the *O Henry Collection.*

Despite his enormous ego and tireless self-promotion, Ellison does not rate above your everyday contributor to pay-by-the-word monthly magazines, someone whose fame will not succeed his death.

In conclusion: it cost a fin for four unexceptional comic stories by four different artists, each preceded by unabashed and uncriticized self-advertisements, all on glossy paper. Your move, Pally.

Terry Zwigoff does CRUMB

Review by Clay Geerdes

As a film, Terry Zwigoff's **CRUMB** is interesting; as a documentary, fragmentary and incomplete; but as history, it's a complete failure. In spite of a competent editing job, the film is still a lot of home movie footage spliced together and, while insiders will know who is talking and what is going on, the general public will see a bizarre freak show, one which relentlessly invades the privacy of the Crumb family. While one can argue that it is difficult to invade the privacy of a couple of people like Robert and Aline Crumb who have made a career out of making their private lives public through a series of comic book stories beginning with **DIRTY LAUNDRY**, it is quite clear that the privacy of Crumb's mother, Beatrice, and his brothers, Charles, Jr., and Maxon has been invaded. In a comic strip reply published in **THE NEW YORKER** for April 24, 1995, Crumb reacted to the film: "Of course, no one feels any empathy for us...No, instead they congratulate us! They can't imagine anything more fabulous than getting a lot of media attention...[97]." Clearly, Robert and Aline Crumb see the movie only in terms of themselves, which is natural, but I'm afraid public reaction is likely to be quite different than they imagine. When I saw the film at the UC Theater in Berkeley in May of 1995, I did not find myself empathizing with Crumb and his wife. I *did* find myself feeling sorry for his mother, Beatrice, and while I am used to seeing Crumb's sex comix and am familiar with his various hang-ups, I am sure the audience around me was a little surprised to see what they considered hard-core pornography on the big screen in front of them. While Crumb expressed his irritation about getting hustled by a lot of people, I was wondering how Sophie Crumb would feel when the kids she goes to school with start asking her about the movie she's in, a movie that contains a lot of Crumb's most explicit sex art, namely his "Joe Blow" story from **ZAP 4**, the most often busted underground comic. While the Crumbs have always been isolated from public opinion via their acceptance by a subculture with a positive attitude toward psychedelic drugs, sex, and music, it might surprise them to know that 99.9999 % of the population will be rather upset when they see Crumb's erotica on the big screen and more upset when they realize his underage daughter appears in the same film.

Terry Zwigoff, who has become the media spokesman for Crumb during the PR phase of **CRUMB** promotion, has been expressing a lot of irritation at those establishment critics who tend to focus on what they term Crumb's "dysfunctional family," but they have simply picked the easiest way to deal with the subject matter of the film; the polite press could hardly focus on Crumb's blatant sexual fantasies and talk about his piggy-back ride on the back of the female editor of **BIG BUTTS** magazine. The early reviews of **CRUMB** in Bay Area papers were based on the screening at the Kabuki in San Francisco where the film played as an entry in the San Francisco International Film Festival and as I read them I got the idea most of the film was about Crumb's family, mainly his brother, Charles, Jr, who committed suicide about a year after the interview shown in the film, but this is not true at all. While Charles is given his due as a major influence on his younger brother, he is not the main focus of the film anymore than is Maxon Crumb, an artist living in poverty on the street in San Francisco. Robert Crumb and his art are the focus of the film and it is Crumb's voice that is heard most of the time. Zwigoff and his crew are a lot kinder to the **ZAP** artist than they are to the rest of the Crumb family. Beatrice, who raised five children, very close in age, under the stressful conditions of wartime America, is treated as an irritation and ridiculed in **CRUMB**. She appears in one scene and is *not* asked what she thinks of her son's artistic achievements. Though she has obviously cooked and cleaned and cared for her depressed son, Charles, who has lived at home since high school, she is given nothing in this film, no understanding or appreciation, just nothing. How are we supposed to feel when we see this woman living in such squalor and realize that her son has just committed suicide and Robert is taking off to live in France? This is Sophie's grandmother being left alone in that miserable house. What's dysfunctional about this picture?

Crumb isn't worried about his mother seeing the film, he says in **THE NEW YORKER**, because she hasn't been to a movie in thirty years. Amazing. And no one is going to mention it to her? None of her friends is going to read about the film? Elsewhere, Crumb has said his mother watches television all the time; can it be he does not know that the Crumb film was discussed on *Entertainment tonight*? That Siskel and Ebert gave it two thumbs up back in April? Well, Crumb, I've got news for you. Beatrice may not go to movies or read **FILMMAKER** magazine, but I'll bet there are a lot of copies of **TIME**, and **NEWSWEEK** floating around her neighborhood and your mom and Aline's mom are going to know all about what's in **CRUMB** whether they go out to a theater to see it or not.

The film had a large audience in Berkeley. The candy counter sold out of **DEVIL GIRL** chocolate bars at $2.50 apiece. There was a display of Crumb comix and memorabilia in a glass case just outside the auditorium and people spent a lot of time looking inside at the various comic books and card sets. Onscreen the sound was clear and the music was nice. Crumb spoke about his art and his life and sketched continuously. Various people spoke about Crumb and his work, but the choice was curious. Spain was onscreen, but undefined. He knew Crumb, of course, from the East Village **OTHER** scene in New York circa 1967-68. Both contributed to Walter Bowart's underground paper. After **ZAP** opened up to other contributors in late 1968, Spain was in the Bay Area and he contributed along with Victor Moscoso, Robert Williams, S. Clay Wilson, and Gilbert Shelton. The audience should have been told about Spain and the other speakers; as **CRUMB** stands, these people are just there and future viewers will have no way of knowing why. Why Trina? Well, she was part of the East Village scene in the mid-sixties and some of her early art appeared in **EVO**. By 1969, she was in the

Bay Area, living with some other women as the It Ain't Me, Babe, collective in Berkeley. She's on film to give an alternative view of Crumb's misogyny. Don Donahue helped Crumb get the first issue of **ZAP** out in February of 1968, which is why he is in the film, but Terry forgets to let the audience know so he is just there, like Hughes, **TIME**'s art critic and Dierdre English, people from the Establishment spliced in to justify **CRUMB**. It would have been more interesting and appropriate to hear from people who knew and worked with Crumb, like Harvey Pekar, for instance, many of whose stories Crumb illustrated for **AMERICAN SPLENDOR**, or Ron Turner, Last Gasp Publisher, who put up the money for **WEIRDO** in the eighties and kept Crumb's comic career afloat, or Gary Groth, **COMICS JOURNAL** publisher who financed **THE COMPLETE CRUMB** and deserves the thanks of all collectors and researchers--most of the people who knew and worked with Crumb are conspicuously missing from Zwigoff's quasi-documentary. Bill Griffith appears for a moment but doesn't mention that Crumb contributed to his **YOUNG LUST** comic books. Those who are looking for the Crumb story are not going to find it here.

Crumb's love of music is touched on, but there is no footage of his participation in the Cheap Suit Serenaders, a band that included Bob Armstrong, Zwigoff, and Dodge. One of the nicest moments in the film for me is when Crumb is shown playing Joplin's *Real Slow Drag* on his old upright piano, one of my favorite rags. Crumb did card sets, album covers, and a number of biographic stories of blues musicians, but very little of this is shown in the film. There is a CD of the sound track on sale . A self-portrait profile by Crumb appears on the cover. Expect the Cheap Suits to play some of the music at their reunion in Concord, June 3, 1995; They will appear with Garrison Keillor's **PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION** which will be broadcast by **KPFA** at 3 pm that afternoon. There's irony for you. Avuncular heartland cleanliness and Godliness meets the misogynistic creator of Angelfood McSpade and Devil Girl and the Vulture Demonesses. Ah, well, I just learned a lot of Catholic Disney investors are divesting since they learned Disney was reponsible for the film, PRIEST. Strange paradoxical times we live in. A team-up I'd love to see: Madonna meets the Cheap Suit Serenaders.

Obviously, Zwigoff chose to focus on the sexual fantasy art of Crumb's early period [or he allowed his film editor to control the final cut] and to ignore the **WEIRDO** period. What was Crumb like as an editor? Did people find him amenable, agree with his choice of material? This aspect of his career is ignored.

While Zwigoff pursues his portrait of the artist as satyr, he neglects the Crumb who was generous with his early art, who gave books to many different companies to help them get started, who gave stories to numerous titles to help sales of those books. Crumb, for all his profligacy, lived the lifestyle of the sixties. He rejected all the establishment come ons and was never in it for the money. He was exploited mercilessly, the fate of any good artist under capitalism, and others made far more money from his work than he ever did. He will be the Van Gogh of his time. In the near future, his originals will sell for six figures and more. As Mr. Natural said: 'Twas ever thus.

In "A Concord Home Companion," in the Oakland**TRIBUNE**, June 5, 1995, p. C-1. William Friar Reviewed Garrison Keillor's Prairie Home Companion broadcast from the Concord Pavilion during which R. Crumb played banjo with the Cheap Suit Serenaders. A Photo shows Crumb with the beard he grew in response to his newly revived celebrity status [**CRUMB** was released in the U. S. in April, 1995]. This show was broadcast over KPFA on June 3, 1995, at 3 pm. Crumb played at 3:25 pm. Keillor joined Crumb in a duet for "San Francisco Bay Blues."

Cartoonist/singer R. Crumb gets a microphone adjustment before the broadcast.

Dressing should be an adventure. Better yet, it should be an aphrodisiac. Lois Lane didn't even think of going out with Clark Kent when he looked like a nerd. But once he became Superman, donning that fabulous cape and bodysuit and showing off his many bulges, she was hooked.

Anka Radakovich
THE WILD GIRLS CLUB, 1995.

The latest **WHITE BUFFALO GAZETTE** is out from Maximum Traffic, POB 2452, Butler, PA 16003. Send Max a couple of bucks for a copy. He trades, plugs, and sometimes comments. As for the Big Boy Goes to Heaven issue. Someone in Ohio actually managed to steal a 300 pound Big Boy in Ohio. I used to eat at the one in Fresno when I was teaching there. I was into junk food then. Didn't know half of what went on in the parking lot in those days. I learned later that some of the biggest drug deals were made in the shadow of the Big Boy.

Jerry Riddle's **CHECK YOUR STARS** is $3 or a trade from him. 4126 San Roberto #2, Anchorage, AK 99508-2862.

Valentino has published his early autobiographical writings/drawings as **VIGNETTES**. Many of these pieces appeared in issues of my **COMIX WAVE MAGAZINE** in the early 1980s. Along with Valentino's commentary, the reprinted stories reveal the development of an artist. It's all here, the good and the bad. I enjoyed the vignette about Valentino meeting Harvey Pekar at a San Diego Con. He was insulted by Pekar's wife. I met Pekar at that same convention. We had corresponded during the early days of his **AMERICAN SPLENDOR** and I had enjoyed the correspondence and was looking forward to a conversation with him. I walked up to his table and introduced myself and he shoved his recent book in my face and tried to sell it to me. No talk. No conversation. He came on like a used car salesman. I eased away from him into the crowd. Sometime later I was told he was to be on *Letterman* so I tuned in that evening and watched Pekar playing the same role on tv. Later I talked to others and some said *Pekar sure did it to Letterman, huh?* I didn't see it that way. I found the whole thing unpleasant. To me, Pekar had a chance to talk about the comix to a National audience and he made a fool of himself by being nasty. For what? We know Letterman works for a capitalist network and he has his limits just as anyone else who works for someone else. Pekar wouldn't have lasted long at his job if he went against his boss. I talked to people who thought Pekar was *cool* by geeking for Letterman; I thought he blew it.
$8.95 pp from Eyescream Graphics, 31878 Del Obispo #118-312, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675.

Nice article on **Guy Colwell** in the Oakland **TRIBUNE**, May 9, 1995. Guy talks about his past and his history as an underground artist and painter in the Bay Area. He is currently painting miniatures and working on a mural for the Caffe Mediterranean in Berkeley.

In **THE JOE BOB REPORT** for May 15, 1995, we find out how the great one feels about health food folks. He sounds like a steak an' potatoes kinda guy. Vegetarians take note. You can get a sample of the **REPORT** from him at POB 2002, Dallas, TX 75221. Send $3.

BOB RITA

Bob Rita, a co-founder of The Print Mint, died of a heart attack this past February. Bob was Chinese and he came to this country from a small village in Hawaii. During the late sixties, he took over publication of **ZAP COMIX** and was at the heart of underground comix publishing for nearly a decade. When you walked in the door of The Print Mint warehouse on Folger in Berkeley, the first thing you saw was Bob sitting behind his desk. The first time I stopped by there as a writer for the Los Angeles **FREE PRESS** doing a series of reports on underground comix, Bob showed me around the warehouse and told me a lot about the way the company had evolved out of a poster business in Moe's bookstore. He gave me a handful of comix from the row of boxes nearby and posed for the picture that was published in the Estren **HISTORY OF UNDERGROUND COMICS**. Bob dealt with the artists who brought in work to be published and his wife, Peggy, kept the books and records. A surfer, Bob was pleased with his reissue of Rick Griffin's surf art from **SURFER** as **TALES OF THE TUBE**. I still have the copy he gave me.